

FINAL DECISION DOCUMENTATION and DECISION RATIONALE

**Fiscal Year 2001/2002 Quartzville Road Storm Proofing
And Decommissioning Project**

Environmental Assessment Number OR-080-01-09

USDI - Bureau of Land Management
Oregon State Office, Salem District, Cascades Resource Area

Township 11 South, Ranges 2&3 East;
Township 12 South, Ranges 2&3 East, Willamette Meridian
Linn County, Oregon

BACKGROUND

In 2000, an IDT (interdisciplinary team) was formed to analyze a proposal to decommission and/or storm proof approximately 40 miles of roads that had been identified by the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) as no longer needed for resource management and to reduce erosion into streams and other natural resource impacts.

The areas analyzed were located on BLM lands and some private land located in the Quartzville and Crabtree watershed areas, scattered throughout Townships 11 and 12 South, Ranges 2 and 3 East, in the Upper Willamette River Basin in Linn County, Oregon (see map in EA, Appendix A). Land use allocations are Riparian Reserve, Matrix (General Forest Management Area), Late Successional Reserve, and Scenic and Recreational River. An environmental analysis was conducted and documented in the *Fiscal Year 2001/2002 Quartzville Road Storm Proofing And Decommissioning Project Environmental Assessment* (EA) Number OR-080-01-09, dated June 25, 2001 and in the associated Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), signed July 10, 2001.

DECISION

The decision to be made by the Cascades Field Manager is whether or not to prepare an environmental impact statement, and whether to approve the road decommissioning project as proposed, not at all, or to some other extent.

Based on site-specific analysis and the supporting project record, as well as the management direction contained in the RMP (*Salem District Resource Management Plan*), dated May, 1995, I have decided to implement the road decommissioning project described in Alternative 1 (Proposed Action), hereafter referred to as the “selected alternative.”

This decision includes:

1. Water-bar and temporarily close approximately 12 miles of roads which would likely be used for future management activities.
2. Decommission approximately 30 miles of road that have been identified as no longer needed for resource management. Activities, where appropriate, will include decompacting the roadway surface (scarifying), removing road cross-drains, water-barring, blocking access to vehicle traffic, and seeding / planting native vegetation at stream crossings. All activities will be consistent with the Best Management Practices identified in the Salem District RMP, Appendix C (EA pp. 6).
3. A summary of the mitigation measures for this project is described in the EA, pp. 11-12.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The alternatives considered in detail included the proposed action alternative which initiated the environmental analysis process and the “no action” alternative which is procedurally required. A description of the alternatives analyzed in detail are contained in the EA, pp. 8-21.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Considering public comment, the content of the EA and supporting project record, and the management direction contained in the RMP, I have decided to implement the selected alternative as described above. My rationale for this decision follows:

1. The selected alternative addresses the identified purpose and need for action in that it meets ACS (Aquatic Conservation Strategy) objectives (FONSI, Finding of No Significant Impact, pp. 2-3, EA pp. 3-6). Specifically, the selected alternative reduces the miles of road within the watershed that are no longer needed by the BLM for resource management thereby reducing the potential for sedimentation and improving hydrological processes.

The “no action” alternative was not selected because it does not address the purpose and need for action. Under the “no action” alternative, all restoration action would be deferred and ongoing natural erosion processes and human influences would continue on the roads in the analysis area. Sediment discharge into the streams would continue at the current rate. Vehicle access over all roads identified would remain unchanged and drainage structures would continue to deteriorate over time. Benefits to wildlife species from road closures would not be achieved in this alternative. There would also be a delay in improving conditions related to the Aquatic Conservation Strategy.

2. The selected alternative is consistent with applicable land use plans, policies, and programs (FONSI pp. 1-4, EA pp.2-7, 12-13, 18-20, 22).
3. Public comment to the EA and FONSI did not identify any concerns with the implementation of the road decommissioning project. Concerns received from Linn County during the scoping period were addressed in the EA, pp. 1-2, 7-8. Concerns from ONRC (Oregon Natural Resources Council) were addressed in the EA pp. 7.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Scoping was accomplished by the BLM interdisciplinary team (IDT) which identified issues at the beginning of the project. Scoping letters were sent to nearby landowners, municipalities, Tribes, County, State and other Federal Agencies, miscellaneous interested parties and the project was announced in the Salem District Project Updates starting in June 2000. A letter from Linn County was received during the scoping period, identifying access as their primary concern. Comments from this letter were addressed in the EA, pp. 1, 7. A letter from ONRC was received during the scoping period identifying sufficiency of the road barricades to stop vehicle use as their primary concern. Comments from this letter were addressed in the EA pp. 7.

Considering public comment, the IDT did not identify any other major issue associated with this project. Therefore, the environmental analysis focused on the following standard elements of the environment - soils, vegetation, water, fish, wildlife, and recreation and administrative access. On July 10, 2001, EA and FONSI, were mailed to the interested parties that provided comments during the scoping process and they were asked to comment on the EA. The EA and FONSI were available for public review from July 10, 2001 to July 24, 2001. One letter was received as a result of the notices for public comment to the EA and FONSI. A response to the comment is contained in Appendix 1, attached.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon review of the EA and supporting project record, I have determined that the selected alternative is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed and will not be prepared. This conclusion is based on the finding rationale described in the *Finding of No Significant Impact for the Fiscal Year 2001/2002 Quartzville Road Storm Proofing And Decommissioning Project*, pp. 1-4.

APPEAL PROVISIONS

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (Board), Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 4 and the enclosed Form 1842-1. If an appeal is taken, a person must submit a written notice of appeal to Dick Prather, Field Manager, 1717 Fabry Road SE, Salem, OR 97306 by the close of business (4:00 pm) on September 5, 2001. The appeal should clearly and concisely state the reasons why the decision is believed to be in error.

If you wish to file a petition pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21 (58 FR 4939, January 19, 1993) or 43 CFR 2804.1 for a stay of the decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay: Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulations, a petitions for stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) The likelihood of the appellants success on the merits,
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm is the stay is not granted, and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.


Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Board and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

If no appeals are filed by close of business (4:00 P.M.) on September 5, 2001 (30 days of the date of this notification), this decision will become final and may be implemented consistent with the elements of the decision. If a timely appeal is received, this decision will be reconsidered in light of the appeal and a final decision will be issued which will be implemented in accordance with 43 CFR Part 4.

CONTACT PERSON

For additional information concerning this decision or the BLM protest process, contact Dan Nevin (503) 375-5673, Cascades Resource Area Office, 1717 Fabry Road SE, Salem, Oregon 97306.

Approved by: 
Dick Prather
Cascades Field Manager

JUL 31 2001
Date

APPENDIX 1

Response to comment on the EA and FONSI

The ONRC responded with a comment letter to the EA by supporting the Proposed Action and applauding the "...efforts to decommission and maintain roads to prevent sedimentation and road bed degradation...". They do however, have the following concern "...BLM will not adequately prevent access to decommissioned roads..." therefore the efforts to prevent natural resource damage will fail.

The Western Oregon Transportation Management Plan (June 1996) provides for different types of vehicle access barricades and through the interdisciplinary team (IDT) process the best value alternative selected for this project is a trench and earth berm barricade. This barricade is constructed by digging a trench approximately three feet wide by four feet deep across the entire roadway in a location that allows for proper water drainage. The excavated material is placed on each side of the trench and effectively prevents motor vehicles from accessing the road.

All the roads proposed for decommissioning will be blocked near their beginning with the trench and earth berm barricade in addition to the scarifying and removal of culverts. Nearly all the roads that are to be storm proofed with water bars will also be barricaded with a trench and earth berm. In addition, the individual water bars, which are to spaced on the average about 200 feet apart, will not be passable to 4X4 vehicles without some vehicle clearance work. This provides an effective disincentive to users even if they are likely to work a bit to make a few berms passable, they will not continue very far up the road. Less than three miles of the proposed storm proof roads are needed for vehicle access in order that BLM may continue active resource and timber management practices. These roads will remain on the BLM maintenance operating plan and receive normal maintenance visits.

The barricades constructed are assessed for effectiveness when BLM personnel conduct storm patrol inspections, monitor a specific resource that is being protected, or are performing their regular land management activities throughout the year. Anytime a barricade is being ineffective in protecting the resource it was intended for or if it needs additional maintenance, the situation is re-evaluated and taken care of as soon as possible and/or put on the list for maintenance the next time regular road maintenance equipment is in the area. This process has worked very well in the past and is expected to work well with these roads. None of the project roads are right adjacent to a high use recreation area which would encourage casual use. They are dead end spur roads located in forest lands accessed by logging roads. Of the roads currently drive able, most are only used by the public occasionally, if at all, and the BLM feels that to use additional resources of time and money to make all the barricades "...absolutely impassable for the distance visible from the main road..." as requested by the ONRC would be unnecessary.